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RR RUEHLN RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHDBU #1549/01 2231004
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8350
INFO RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1713
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1491
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1482
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1277
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 1726
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS 1034
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 9707
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 1755
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1757
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1706
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 1747
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 1706
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1644

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DUSHANBE 001549

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, DRL
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SUBJECT: THE END OF AN ERA FOR TAJIKISTAN'S ISLAMIC PARTY

REF: DUSHANBE 1524

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¶1. SUMMARY: Chargé d'Affaires attended Said Abdullo Nuri's funeral held in Dushanbe August 10. Nuri, the Chairman of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) passed away August 9 (reftel) after a long battle with cancer. The funeral was well-attended by prominent officials and leaders, reflecting Nuri's influential position and his critical role in Tajikistan's history. During Tajikistan's Civil War he led the United Tajik Opposition's fight against the residual communist government, but also ended the war by signing the Tajik National Peace Accord in 1997. Despite the high profile of his deputy Muhiddin Kabiri, Nuri's death creates uncertainty about his successor and the IRPT's leadership. END SUMMARY.

¶2. An entire city block was cordoned off as thousands of people waited in line to pay their respects to Nuri's family members and IRPT officials. Religious leaders, heads of international organizations, senior government officials including the mayor of Dushanbe, several ministers, officials from the President's Administration and the Head of the National Bank all attended the funeral. President Rahmonov was in India on an official visit, but he is expected to pay his respects to the IRPT and Nuri's family upon his return. Rahmonov visited Nuri several times while he was ill with cancer and the two exchanged emotional public toasts at the June 28 Tajikistan Day of Unity in Garm.

¶3. The family and Party documented the funeral for their own records. Prominent figures were requested to say a few words on camera and Chargé d'Affaires expressed his sincere condolences and remarked that Tajikistan has lost an important figure who played a vital role in the reconciliation process after the country's civil war. Media organizations were also present, including the BBC. Local media organizations have published several articles about Nuri's death, all respectful of Nuri and his pivotal roles in the civil war and peace process.

¶4. Even after death, controversy around Nuri persisted. Media reports state that according to his will, Nuri wanted to be

buried next to Muhammadjon Rustamov, also known as Mawlawi Hindustani who was Nuri's mentor. However, Embassy sources tell PolOff that the government would not permit Nuri to be buried in that location. In Nuri's final days the government suggested that his family take him back to the Tavildara district where he was born and bury him there. Nuri's family then suggested they should bury him at his home in Dushanbe. Authorities rejected this idea as well and said that his family should bury him in a public Dushanbe cemetery.

15. The IRPT has not yet named a new party chairman. Although Muhiddin Kabiri has been acting as the de facto chairman during Nuri's frequent trips abroad for medical treatment in Iran or Germany, he has not expressed interest becoming Chairman.

16. COMMENT: Whoever the party elects as their new chairman will have a large legacy to fill, but also the opportunity to shape Tajikistan's future, as the IRPT is seen as the second most influential party after the president's own party, the People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan. As Central Asia's only legal Islamic political party, the IRPT needs to choose its next leader carefully. END COMMENT.

17. BIO NOTE: Said Abdullo Nuri was born on March 15, 1947 in the Oshtiyon village of the Tavildara district. Nuri graduated from secondary school in 1964 and received religious education from his father. Nuri has a long history of government opposition. In 1973 he was arrested by Soviet authorities for distributing Islamic literature. He also helped establish a youth group in 1974 called the Islamic Revival. In 1987 he was arrested for possession of drugs and sent to Siberia for 1.5 years. After being released from prison, in 1988, he worked as the chief editor of the newspaper "Minbari Islom" (Tribune of Islam).

18. In 1990 he helped establish the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan. During the Tajik civil war from 1992-1997 he led the United Tajik Opposition in exile from Afghanistan against

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the sitting government led by communist apparatchiks. In 1997, Nuri signed the Tajik National Peace Accord with President Rahmonov, bringing the bloody civil war to a close and helping to form a coalition government. In 1999, the IRPT unanimously elected Nuri as its Chairman. For the past two years, Nuri had been suffering from stomach cancer.
HUSHEK